Study on bacterial vaginosis among a group of Iraqi women

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ABSTRACT

Objective: the isolation and identification of bacteria in women with clinical vaginosis. Methods: A cross sectional which included 176 women diagnosed with BV according to Amsel criteria. The study carried out in National Cancer Research Center – University of Baghdad, the participants were collected during the period from February 2019 to December 2019. The participants undergo vaginal swab and then it was subjected gram stain for bacterial identification. The swab was performed by trained clinicians, in which a sterile unlubricated speculum was inserted into the vagina then the specimens were collected from the lateral vaginal wall and posterior fornix using two sterile cotton tipped swabs, the swabs removed carefully to avoid contamination. Results: The study
included 176 women diagnosed with BV, mean age was 31.4 ± 8.9 years, the most common type *Staphylococcus aureus* with 19% prevalence, followed by *Escherichia coli* (16%), 12% *Enterobacter* spp, 11% *Klebsiella pneumonia*, 9% and lastly 1% *Neisseria* spp.

**Conclusions:** Gram negative bacteria showed the highest rate for causing bacterial vaginosis, only one type of gram-positive bacteria was present (*Staphylococcus*) which showed the highest prevalence of all the bacteria.

**Keywords:** Bacterial vaginosis, microbiota, Gram negative bacteria, contamination

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is one of the most important causes of vaginal discharge with estimated prevalence of 40 – 50% (Morris et al., 2001; Tolosa et al., 2006), in a recent meta-analysis in 2019 that examined the global prevalence of BV but it in the range of 23 – 29% worldwide (Peebles et al., 2019). An altered vaginal microbiota is the main cause of BV, in which the production of Hydrogen peroxide-producing lactobacilli is reduced which in term increase the pH of the vaginal media and consequently cause overgrowth of anaerobic bacteria (Swidsinski et al., 2005; Jung et al., 2017). In addition several other risk factors are associated with BV like; sexual activity (Fethers et al., 2008), race and ethnicity (Beamer et al., 2017; Allsworth and Peipert, 2007), douching (Ness et al., 2002), and cigarette smoking (Bradshaw et al., 2014).

BV can lead to several maternal adverse outcomes like endometrial bacterial colonization, postpartum fever, premature labor (Leitch and Kiss, 2007) and other complications (Andrews et al., 2006; Oleen-Burkey and Hillier, 1995; MacDermott, 1995), hence screening for the infection is highly important during pregnancy. Severity of the infection of bacterial vaginitis may increase the chance of infection with sexually transmitted diseases which in turn increase risk of cancer. The current work objection is the isolation and identification of bacteria in women with clinical vaginitis.

2. **PATIENTS AND METHODS**

**Study design**

A cross sectional which included 176 women diagnosed with BV according to Amsel criteria. The participants undergo vaginal swab and then it was subjected gram stain for bacterial identification. The swab was performed by trained clinicians, in which a sterile unlubricated speculum was inserted into the vagina then the specimens were collected from the lateral vaginal wall and posterior fornix using two sterile cotton tipped swabs, the swabs removed carefully to avoid contamination. The first swab was used for the preparation of a smear for Gram staining, and the 2nd swab was placed into Amies transport media for culture.

**Study setting**

The study carried out in National Cancer Research Center – University of Baghdad, the participants were collected during the period from February 2019 to December 2019.

**Diagnostic criteria**

The diagnosis of BV is based on the presence of 3 more of Amsel criteria, which included: 1) elevated pH (>4.5), 2) Clue cells (≥20% on saline microscopy), 3) vaginal discharge, and 4) Fishy odor (after applying a solution with 10% potassium) (Amsel et al., 1983, Mohammadzadeh et al., 2014).

**Inclusion criteria**

Women age between 15 – 49 years,

**Exclusion criteria**

Women using intrauterine contraceptive devices, those on active antibacterial drugs (oral or vaginal) during the last two weeks

3. **RESULTS**

The study included 176 women diagnosed with BV, mean age was 31.4 ± 8.9 years, the most common type *Staphylococcus aureus* with 19% prevalence, followed by *Escherichia coli* (16%), 12% *Enterobacter* spp, 11% *Klebsiella pneumonia*, 9% and lastly 1% *Neisseria* spp, as illustrated in table 1 & figure 1.
Table 1 pathological bacterial that presented in vagina of female participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bacterial</th>
<th>Number (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Escherichia coli</em></td>
<td>28 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Proteus mirabilis</em></td>
<td>5 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Klebsiella pneumonia</em></td>
<td>19 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Enterobacter</em> spp</td>
<td>21 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Neisseria</em> spp</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Staphylococcus</em> aureus</td>
<td>33 (19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</em></td>
<td>16 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No bacterial</td>
<td>51 (29%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. DISCUSSION

The alteration of normal bacterial flora is associated with the development of BV, which is one of the most important causes of pathological vaginal discharge (Coleman and Gaydos, 2018). In the present study the rate of negative bacterial swab was present in 52% of the swabs, while gram-positive was present in 19% of the cases. Despite the high prevalence of gram-negative bacteria, individually *Staphylococcus* bacteria (19%) were higher than each of gram-negative bacteria. *E. coli* showed the highest rate (16%) among the gram-negative bacteria.

This finding was in agreement with another study, in which *E coli* showed the highest prevalence (13.8%), followed by *Klebsiella* spp (13.4%), *Enterobacter* spp (11.7%), and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (9.47%) with 59.2% gram negative in the sample (Khamees, 2012), while 24.1% had gram-positive bacterial mostly *Staphylococcus* bacteria (Khamees, 2012). This finding also reported by several Iraqi studies (Al-Jobori, 2008; Al-Jammaly and Abdulla, 2008; Al-Taweel et al., 2015; Abdulameer and Kandala, 2016; Ibrahim et al., 2019).

BV is distinct disease that is associated with reduction in the population of the natural gram-negative normal flora (*Lactobacilli* spp) which is associated with overgrowth of pathological bacteria especially gram-negative anerobic (Yeoman et al., 2010). Cultivation studies give an insight about the phenotypic characteristics of microbes which will allow for the experimental manipulation of these organisms and testing theoretical hypothesis about their pathogenesis and their virulence (Srinivasan and Fredricks, 2008).
5. CONCLUSION
Gram negative bacteria showed the highest rate for causing bacterial vaginosis, only one type of gram-positive bacteria was present (Staphylococcus) which showed the highest prevalence of all the bacteria.

Author contribution
Kawakeb N Abdulla: Conception and design of the work, the acquisition, analysis, and interpretation of data for the work, and Drafting the work.
Saba Reyadh Shaker: Conception and design of the work, interpretation of data for the work, and revising it critically for important intellectual content
Hayder A Fawzi: Conception and design of the work, and Drafting the work and finally revising it critically for important intellectual content

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Conflict of Interest
The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Informed consent
Written informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Additional informed consent was obtained from all individual participants for whom identifying information is included in this manuscript.

Ethical approval for human
All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards (Code: 2019/D015).

Data and materials availability
All data associated with this study are present in the paper.

REFERENCES AND NOTES


